

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8814
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
DIA WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 4929

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, EC
SUBJECT: ELECTION REPORT: ROLDOS WITH A STRONG FINISH

REF: QUITO 4891

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. HIS SURPRISINGLY STRONG FIRST-ROUND SHOWING LEAVES JAIME ROLDOS IN A COMMANDING POSITION FOR THE RUN-OFF ELECTION. HIS FIRST PLACE FINISH WAS LARGELY DUE TO A CAMPAIGN THAT PEAKED AT THE RIGHT TIME AND WAS BASED ON SEVERAL SIMPLE ELEMENTS VERY ATTRACTIVE TO LARGE NUMBERS OF UNDECIDED VOTERS. DURAN, HUERTA AND BORJA, ON THE OTHER HAND, ALL SHOWED CRITICAL FLAWS. THE VOTING POPULATION IN GENERAL DEMONSTRATED A HIGH DEGREE OF PERCEPTION AND SELECTIVENESS IN CHOOSING CANDIDATES. NO THE JOCKEYING FOR POSITION FOR THE SECOND ROUND BEGINS, ASWELL AS WATCHFUL WAITING TO DETERMINE HOW THE MILITARY WILL REACT TO THIS TRONG PROTEST SHOWING. END SUMMARY.

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2. WITH SOME 70 PERCENT OF THE UNOFFICIAL VOTE TALLIED IT IS OBVIOUS THAT JAIME ROLDOS AND OSVALDO HURTADO HAVE PULLED OFF A MASTERFUL POLITICAL FEAT. HEOPED (OR HAMPERED, DEPENDING ON NE'S POLITICAL POINT OF VIEW) BY CLOSE IDENTIFICATION WITH POPULIST ASSAD BUCARAM, HURT (OR, AGAIN, HELPED) BY ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE MILITARY

PRECISELY TO DAMAGE THIER CHANCES, THEY MANAGED TO PULL BETTER THAN 30 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, APPROXIMATELY TEN PERCENTAGE POINTS BETTER THAN THEIR NEAREST COMPETITOR. THEIR SUCCESS IS DUE TO A NUMBER OF FACTORS, INCLUDING THE POSITIVE IMAGE THEY DEVELOPED IN THE FINAL DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN AND A NUMBER OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN THE CAPAIGNS OF THEIR COMPETITORS.

3. ROLDOS AND HURTADO HAMMERED HOME A NUMBER OF POINTS IN THEIR TELEVISION AND RADIO APPEARANCES DURING THE LAST DAYS OF CAMPAIGNING; FIRST, THAT A VOTE FOR THEM REPRESENTED A PROTEST VOTE AGAINST THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT; SECOND, THAT A VOTE FOR THEM WAS AN EFFECTIVE RPT EFFECTIVE PROTEST VOTE SINCE THEY ALONE HAD A CHANCE TO BEAT THE "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATES, DURAN AND HUERTA; THIRD, THAT THEY REPRESENTED A POSITION IN FAVOR OF MODERATE CHANGE AND WERE NOT RADICALS. THE SERIOUS TONE TAKEN IN THEIR CAMPAIGN AND THIER ABILITY TO PROJECT AND IMAGE OF INDEPENDENCE FROM BUCARAM (EXCEPT, OF COURSE, IN BUCARAM'S STRONGHOLDS IN GUAYAQUIL WHERE IDENTIFICATION WITH HIM WAS PROBABLY SIGNIFICANT) MEANT INCREASING ACCEPTANCE BY MIDDLE CLASS VOTERS.

4. ANOTHER FACTOR WHICH PROBABLY INFLUENCED VOTERS WAS ADMIRAL POVEDA'S NATIONALLY TELEVISED SPEECH THE EVENING OF JULY 15. POVEDA REPEATED THE MILITARY'S INTENTION OF CARRYING THROUGH THE RETORNO PROCESS AND CONFIRMED

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THAT WHICHEVER CANDIDATE WON HE WOULD BE ALLOWED TO TAKE OFFICE. ALTHOUGH IT SURELY WASN'T INTENDED TO HAVE THAT EFFECT, POVEDA'S STATEMENTS PROBABLY SERVED TO CONVINCE A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF VOTERS THAT THEY COULD SAFELY SUPPORT ROLDOS AND HURTADO WITHOUT ENDANGERING THE RETORNO PROCESS.

5. PERHAPS EQUALLY SIGNIFICANT IN THE ROLDOS/HURTADO CAMPAIGN WERE WHAT WERE SHOWN TO BE SERIOUS FLOAWS IN THE CAMPAIGNS OF THE MAJOR OPPONENTS. MUCH OF ROLDOS' TOTAL APPARENTLY CAME AT THE EXPENSE OF RODRIGO BORJA AND HIS DEMOCRATIC LEFT PARTY. BORJA APPEARS AT THIS POINT TO BE WINNING ONLY 12 PERCENT, ONLY TWO PERCENT MORE THAN MAVERICK ABDON CALDERON AND ABOUT A THIRD LOWER THAN PRE-ELECTON PROJECTIONS. BORJA COULD NOT SHAKE THE IMAGE OF A LOSER, AN IMAGE CLEVERLY CULTIVATED BY THE ROLDOS CAMP. IN FACT, DEMOCRATIC LEFT OFFICIALS HAVE PROTESTED THE OPINION POLLS WHICH WERE SO POPULAR DURING THE CAMPAIGN AND WHICH INVARIABLY SHOWED BORJA UNLIKELY TO CHALLENGE. THEY CLAIM THAT THESE POLLS MISLED VOTERS, AND CONSTITUTED A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY, A CLAIM WHICH IS AT LEAST PARTIALLY CORRECT.

6. SIXTO DURAN SUFFERED, AS PREDICTED, FROM A PHENOMENON WHICH BECAME EVIDENT LATE IN THE CAMPAIGN: BLOC VOTING COULD SIMPLY NOT BE COUNTED UPON TO PROVIDE TRADITIONAL MARGINS FOR CANDIDATES REPRESENTING IDENTIFIED POSITIONS. THE CONSERVATIVE SIERRA SIMPLY NO LONGER EXISTS. EARLY RETURNS SHOW SIXTO GARNERING MUCH LOWER THAN RIGHT OF CENTER CANDIDATES IN THE PAST. HE SUCCEEDED IN DOING SO, BUT LARGELY AT THE EXPENSE OF HUERTA RATHER THAN ROLDOS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 QUITO 4929

7. HUERTA, DESPITE HIS ENORMOUS CAMPAIGN WARCHEST COULDN'T OVERCOME PUBLIC SCEPTICISM OVER HIS IMAGE OF A LOSER, HIS AGE AND HEALTH, AND THE IMAGE OF AN "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATE. HIS DISHONORABLE CONDUCT IN THE DUMPING HIS NEPHEW FRANCISCO (PANCHO) HUERTA AS THE LIBERAL CANDIDATE ALSO PROBABLY CAME HOME TO ROOST. IN RETROSPECT, PANCHO HUERTA WAS PERHAPS THE ONLY NATIONAL FIGURE WHO COULD HAVE CHALLENGED ROLDOS ON YOUTH, OPPOSITION IMAGE, AND REGIONAL BALANCE.

8. ANOTHER LOSER WAS THE MOSCOW-LINE COMMUNISTS WHO HAD HOPED TO ACHIEVE AT LEAST 7 PERCENT OF THE VOTE AND ONLY WON 5 PERCENT. IT'S PEKING-LINE OPPONENTS, WHO WERE DENIED A PLACE ON THE BALLOT AND THEN ACTIVELY LOBBIED FOR "NULL" VOTES WERE ALSO TO CLAIM COMPARATIVE SUCCESS

FOR THEIR EFFORTS (ABOUT 4 PERCENT OF THE VOTES WERE VOIDED).

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9. ONE FACTOR WHICH IS EMERGING CLEARLY IS THAT OF A THINKING, CONSCIOUS ELECTORATE. VOTERS CONSIDERED THEIR CHOICE VERY CAREFULLY AND FOLLOWED CLOSELY THE CAMPAIGN STATEMENTS OF THE VARIOUS CANDIDATES. FOR INSTANCE, EARLY RETURNS IN SECTIONAL ELECTIONS INDICATE THAT TICKET SPLITTING WAS THE RULE, RATHER THAN EXCEPTION. TRADITIONAL BLOC VOTES WERE LATE IN DEVELOPING AND EVEN THEN, EXCEPT FOR THE URBAN SLUM VOTE IN GUAYAQUIL WHICH OVERWHELMINGLY WENT FOR ROLDOS, WERE NOT THE FACTOR THEY HAD BEEN IN THE PAST. THIS FACTOR ALSO HELPED ROLDOS. NOT ONLY WAS HE THE BENEFICIARY OF THE SOLE REMAINING KEY BLOC VOTE, BUT HE REAPED THE GAIN FROM THE BREAKDOWN OF THAT VOTE IN OTHER AREAS.

10. ONE FINAL SIGNIFICANT CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS ELECTION WAS THE PEACE THAT CHARACTERIZED IT. THE EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED NO REPORTS OF SERIOUS VIOLENCE ON ELECTION DAY. IN ONE INCIDENT, CONCENTRATION OF POPULAR FORCES CANDIDATE FOR GUAYAQUIL MAYOR, AQUILES RODRIGUEZ WAS REPORTEDLY ARRESTED AFTER HE VEHEMENTLY PROTESTED THE FACT THAT A COMPANION WAS NOT ON THE VOTING LISTS AND THUS NOT ALLOWED TO VOTE. ANOTHER IS THE REPORT THAT SHOTS WERE FIRED AT JAIME ROLDOS' HOME THIS MORNING. NO INJURIES WERE REPORTED IN THAT INCIDENT AND THE SUSPECTS HAVE APPARENTLY BEEN ARRESTED. SOME UNREST OCCURED IN VARIOUS POLLING PLACES WHEN POLL WORKERS WERE LATE IN ARRIVING, THUS CAUSING BACKLOGS. OTHERWISE LINES APPEARED TO MOVE SMOOTHLY AND THERE WERE NO MAJOR PROBLEMS.

11. ALTHOUGH IT STILL MAY BE SOMEWHAT PREMATURE TO ACCURATELY CHARACTERIZE THIS FIRST ROUND, OBVIOUSLY ANTI-MILITARY GOVERNMENT, GENERATIONAL, AND PRO-CHANGE ELEMENTS WERE PRESENT. DURAN AND HUERTA, WHO REPRESENTED

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IN THE POPULAR MIND A CONTINUATION OF PRESENT POLICIES AND WERE ACCUSED OF BEING "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATES, TOGETHER POLLED ONLY 43 PERCENT OF THE VOTE COMPARED TO THOSE WHO EVINced A MORE REFORMIST IMAGE.

12. ALTHOUGH MUCH WILL, OF COURSE, OCCUR BETWEEN NOW AND THE

RUN-OFF. ROLDOS HAS A STRONG LEAD, AND IT WILL BE
DIFFICULT TO STOP HIM. MEANWHILE, WE HAVE NOT SEEN OR
HEARD OF ANY MILITARY REACTION TO THE ROLDOS PROSPECT
SINCE THE ELECTION.
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